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Department of Health News

New Acting Secretary of Health - Alison Beam, J.D.



Alison Beam is the Acting Secretary of Health for the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH). Prior to serving in this role, Ms. Beam served as Deputy Chief of Staff to Governor Tom Wolf, coordinating initiatives and resources across Pennsylvania's departments of Health, Human Services, Drug & Alcohol Programs, Aging and Insurance, as well as the Office of Advocacy and Reform. She helped coordinate the administration's COVID-19 pandemic response; the rollout of Pennie, Pennsylvania's health insurance marketplace; the Reach Out PA campaign; and the Wolf Administration's health care reform plan. Prior to transitioning to the Governor's Office, Beam served as Chief of Staff to the Pennsylvania Insurance Commissioner. She previously served as Director of Public Policy and Associate Counsel for Independence Health Group in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Ms. Beam graduated from Drexel University School of Law and holds a Bachelor of Science in Health Policy and Administration from the Pennsylvania State University.

New Acting Physician General - Dr. Denise A. Johnson, M.D.



Dr. Denise A. Johnson, M.D., FACOG, FACHE is the Acting Physician General. Prior to serving in this role, Dr. Johnson was most recently Chief Medical Officer at Meadville Medical Center. Before joining the Meadville Medical Center leadership team in 2008, Dr. Johnson spent 13 years in private practice in Meadville. She is board certified in Obstetrics and Gynecology by the American Board of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and is a Fellow of the American

National Health Observances

May

Arthritis Awareness [Month](#)

Better Hearing and Speech [Month](#)

Healthy Vision [Month](#)

Mental Health [Month](#)

National Asthma and Allergy Awareness [Month](#)

National Osteoporosis [Month](#)

National Physical Fitness and Sports [Month](#)

National Stroke Awareness [Month](#)

National Teen Pregnancy Prevention [Month](#)

Skin Cancer Prevention [Month](#)

National Women's Health [Week](#)

Healthy and Safe Swimming [Week](#)

National Women's Health [Week](#)

College of Healthcare Executives. She serves on the Governor's Commission for Women.

Dr. Johnson has been involved in various community and regional groups focusing on diversity and inclusion and on the needs of women. She is the current board chair of the Meadville Area Free Clinic. She is past chair of the board of directors of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape.

She received her Medical Degree at Georgetown University School of Medicine and completed her residency at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

New Pennsylvania State Health Assessment

The [State of Our Health: A Statewide Health Assessment of Pennsylvania](#) was published in January. This state health assessment (SHA) identifies the populations most impacted by prioritized health risks and the possible causes for those disparate impacts. Eight themes are addressed, centering around information on health disparities and the factors, often social determinants, associated with these disparities. These themes are access to care, environmental health, mental health, maternal and infant health, substance use, injury and violence prevention, chronic diseases, and infectious diseases and immunization. The SHA can be used to identify health priorities for communities, to document need for grant requests, and to support program proposals. To become involved in the Healthy Pennsylvania Partnership or the SHA update committee, contact the SHA team at RA-SHA@pa.gov.

Vaccine Finder



As of May 7, [Vaccines.gov](#) is the mapping source used to help individuals find a location where they can get vaccinated. The transition to Vaccine Finder will help ensure people can get vaccinated close to home and with the vaccine they may prefer. Individuals searching for a vaccine can choose between locations having any of the Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson vaccines. It is a free, online service developed by Boston Children's Hospital, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that provides the latest vaccine availability at provider and pharmacy locations. In addition, individuals can text their zip code to GETVAX (438829) for English, or VACUNA (822862) for Spanish and receive three possible vaccination sites in their area, with phone numbers to call for an appointment.

PA Project Firstline

June

Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness [Month](#)

Men's Health [Month](#)

Myasthenia Gravis Awareness [Month](#)

National Aphasia Awareness [Month](#)

National Congenital Cytomegalovirus Awareness [Month](#)

National Safety [Month](#)

National Lightning Safety Awareness [Week](#)

July

National Cleft & Craniofacial Awareness & Prevention [Month](#)

National Youth Sports [Week](#)



[PA Project Firstline](#), developed in partnership with the CDC, is an innovative project designed to promote foundational knowledge on infection prevention and control for all types of frontline healthcare workers. It was developed by the department's Healthcare-associated Infection Prevention team to

provide healthcare workers with additional knowledge on infection prevention and control in a way that is easily accessible and immediately applicable to their work. Available to healthcare workers in all healthcare settings, including hospitals, outpatient clinics, dialysis centers, and nursing homes, and others, the project supports infection control and prevention and helps to keep the healthcare community safe from infectious disease threats. Healthcare workers can text JOIN to IPC4U (47248) to sign up for the text messaging program.

Environmental Health – Algal Bloom

The [Division of Environmental Health Epidemiology](#) in DOH collaborates with other state agencies under a CDC-funded environmental health capacity building grant to monitor and protect PA residents from harmful algal blooms (HABs). HABs occur when certain microscopic organisms produce toxins in a waterbody. Previously, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Fish and Boat Commission, Department of Environmental Protection, and DOH worked independently on HAB response, which made data coordination and gaining access to HAB-related information difficult. In response, DOH partnered with these agencies to develop a unified database which enabled all HAB data collected by the various agencies to be housed in a central location. The unified database will inform a public-facing dashboard regarding location and type of water body that was contaminated, levels of contamination, level of health advisory issued for the water body, etc., and aid decision making by concerned citizens. For more information, contact env.health.concern@pa.gov.



Algal Bloom Lake Erie

Sunscreen Dispenser Program

The Sunscreen Dispenser Program is a partnership between Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

Events

Civic Engagement and Civic Infrastructure to Advance Health Equity: A [Workshop](#), virtual, June 14 - 15, 2021

2021 Annual Pennsylvania Association of Community Health Centers [Conference](#) and Clinical Summit, October 12 - 14, Lancaster

2021 PA Oral Health [Summit](#), November 11 and 12, Harrisburg

(DCNR) and Department of Health. In its fifth year, it is aimed at helping protect the public against melanoma and encourage state park visitors to adopt safe outdoor recreation practices. Growing from two state parks in 2017 to 22 in 2021, the program has the potential to reach approximately one million visitors. The bright yellow-colored dispensers are conveniently located along public beach areas and swimming pools at the state parks. Each dispenser contains 1,000 squirts worth of a zinc-based sunblock with broad-spectrum, SPF 30 protection. The sunscreen is paraben and oxybenzone free and aquatic and marine safe. Questions about DCNR's Sunscreen Dispenser Program can be sent to Assistant Director of State Parks, [Ryan Dysinger](#).



Photo credit - Ryan Dysinger

Swimming at DCNR State Parks



Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) offers an array of water-based recreation activities including swimming at public beaches and pools. Splashing around is a great way to cool off on hot days and swimming is great for physical exercise. Unless otherwise posted, and except for Presque Isle State Park and Fuller Lake in Pine Grove Furnace State Park, state park beaches are swim at your own risk. Visitors are urged to be vigilant when their children and/or other family members are swimming. Other tips for staying healthy and safe while swimming at state parks include swimming with a buddy; using sunscreen and drinking water; leaving no trace - keep the beach and water clean and clear of trash and litter; entering water feet first; staying out of the water if you feel ill; and taking your children on frequent bathroom breaks.

All state park beaches are smoke-free to help improve air quality and reduce littering of cigarettes. To find a state park near you with a beach or pool, visit DCNR's [Where to Swim](#) website.

State Health Improvement Plan – Annual Report

The 2020 State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) annual report was recently published and can be found on the [SHIP webpage](#). The SHIP is a five-year strategic plan developed in collaboration with diverse stakeholders. SHIP priorities include:

- Obesity, physical inactivity, and nutrition;
- Primary care and preventive services; and
- Mental health and substance use.

Key findings for 2019-2020 include:

Obesity, physical inactivity and nutrition: Improvement in obesity and physical activity in the state continues to lag, indicating a continued need to make these health improvement priorities.

Primary care and preventive services: Availability of primary care services has improved. Efforts continue to improve access in rural communities and expand primary care with non-physician providers.

Mental health and substance use: Deaths and impact from suicides and addictions continue to be a concern.

For more information on participating in state health improvement activities, contact RA-ship@pa.gov.

Disclaimer

The information provided in this newsletter is intended to be of general information to Pennsylvania's HIPP partnerships. It is not intended as an endorsement or recommendation of any specific process, service, product, company, or funding source outside of the Department of Health auspices. Further examination and research of information is recommended.

Health Partners

PennDOT Litter Project



Organizations can get involved in keeping Pennsylvania litter free through several initiatives. These include Adopt A Highway, Adopt and Beautify, and Pick Up Pennsylvania. [Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful](#) published two reports entitled the [Pennsylvania Litter](#)

[Research Study](#) and the [Municipal Litter and Illegal Dumping Cost Study](#). Both studies concluded that to reduce the amount of litter, local and state governments must focus more on educating the public on litter prevention and enforcing and enacting laws against littering. DEP and PennDOT are hoping to have facilitated conversations between state agencies, local governments, community groups, and industry stakeholders to create practical solutions to address Pennsylvania's littering problem that will benefit all people who work, play, and reside in the commonwealth. For more information, contact the Adopt-A-Highway Coordinator or Adopt and Beautify Roadside Specialist at your local PennDOT [County Maintenance Office](#).

vulnerable, disparate, and/or marginalized communities. The deadline for applications for the current quarter is June 18, 2021.

● **Farmers market promotion grants:** Grants of up to \$500,000 are available from the [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) for projects that assist in the development, coordination, and expansion of domestic farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agritourism activities, and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities. Eligible entities include nonprofit organizations, business associations, and local governments. Applications are due June 21, 2021.

● **Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program:** The [U.S. Department of Justice](#) is providing 110 awards of up to \$600,000 to rural counties to reduce violent crime and drug abuse and enhance public safety while supporting victims. The purpose is to reduce the impact of opioids, stimulants, and other substances on individuals and communities, reduce overdose fatalities, and mitigate the impacts on crime victims by supporting comprehensive, collaborative initiatives. Applications are due June 21, 2021.

● **Grants to help children exposed to violence:** The [U.S. Department of Justice](#) is offering funding of up to \$930,000 for programs to develop support services for children exposed to violence in their homes, schools, and communities; and up to \$500,000 for training and technical assistance. Eligible applications include government, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations. Applications are due by June 22, 2021.

● **Justice and mental health collaboration:** Funding is available from the [U.S. Department of Justice](#) for states and local governments to plan, implement or expand a criminal justice and mental health collaboration program. Approximately 18 awards for up to \$550,000 are available for up to 3 years. A 20% matching contribution is required in years one and two of the grant. A 40% match is required in year three. Applications are due June 22, 2021.

● **Community needs grants:** [Bank of America](#) is offering grants of between \$5,000 and \$50,000 for community improvement. Categories include affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization including environmental health and community safety. Nonprofit organizations are eligible. Applications are due June 25, 2021.

● **Workforce mental health program grants for Philadelphia:** Direct service grants of up to \$75,000 and non-direct service grants of up to \$250,000 are available to nonprofit organizations serving Philadelphia from the [van Ameringen](#)

[Foundation](#). Direct service includes case management, assessment, counseling, psychotherapy, psychiatric care, training, or jobs, housing, and other supports. Non-direct service includes advocacy, media, and training. Letters of inquiry are due June 26, 2021.

- **Opioid affected youth initiative:** Grants for funding and technical assistance for states and local governments is available from the [U.S. Department of Justice](#) to develop and implement a response system to assist with the opioid epidemic. Focus areas include identification, prevention, treatment, enforcement, and deterrence. Funding for opioid affected youth is available in two categories, programs and services up to \$750,000 for 3 years, and training and technical assistance up to \$1,500,000 for 3 years. Applications are due June 28, 2021.

- **2021 Advancing Cities Challenge:** [JPMorgan Chase](#) is accepting applications for up to \$5 million over three years in support of innovative, sustainable solutions that drive wealth creation and economic success of Black and Latinx women. Awards will be made to four to eight nonprofit organizations for cross-sector collaborative projects.

- **Enriching the lives of families and children:** The [Big Lots Foundation](#) is offering grants in the areas of health care, housing, hunger, and education, with a focus on those serving women and children. Support is provided in the form of monetary gifts, gift cards, and merchandise in-kind. Applications are accepted from nonprofit charitable organizations. Requests are due July 1, 2021.

- **Pediatric mental health access grants:** The [Health Resources and Services Administration](#) is providing funding for 32 grants averaging \$445,000 to promote behavioral health integration into pediatric primary care through telehealth. The focus is on achieving health equity related to racial, ethnic, and geographic disparities in access to care. State and political subdivisions of states are eligible. Applications are due July 6, 2021.

- **Choice neighborhoods planning grants:** The [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#) is providing funding to housing authorities, local governments and nonprofit organizations to improve living conditions. Approximately 11 grants of \$450,000 are available for projects up to 2 years. The focus is on housing, people, and neighborhoods. Applications are due July 13, 2021.

- **Opioid crisis grants:** The [Foundation for Opioid Response Efforts](#) is offering grants of up to \$300,000 for two-years to reduce overdoses, increase access to treatment, and support long-term recovery. Eligible applicants include nonprofits,

nonprofit universities, and state and local governments. Applications are due July 19, 2021.

- **Firehouse Subs first responder grants:** The [Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation](#) provides lifesaving equipment, prevention education resources, public safety career scholarships, and disaster relief resources. Grants are typically between \$15,000 to \$25,000, and up to \$50,000. Eligible organizations include fire departments, law enforcement, EMS, public safety organizations, non-profits, and schools. Fourth quarter grants are due August 18, 2021.

- **Transportation for vaccination:** [Local Initiatives Support Corporation](#) is coordinating with Uber, PayPal, and Walgreens to support low-wealth, Black, Brown, and Latinx communities to assist with rides, childcare options, providing language translation, and delivering other vital services for vaccination. Funding is available through December 31, 2021 or as long as resources are available.

- **Culture of health grants:** The [Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#) Pioneering Ideas program is funding projects to influence health equity in the future. Preference will be given to applicants that are nonprofit organizations. The average Pioneering Ideas grant in 2019 was \$315,031. However, there is not an explicit range for budget requests. Proposals will be accepted throughout the year on a rolling admission.

- **Health center facility loan guarantee program:** The [Health Resources and Services Administration](#) has an ongoing program that supports access to capital funding by guaranteeing up to 80 percent of financing needed to support capital infrastructure projects. Active Health Center Program awardees under section 330 of the Public Health Services Act are eligible. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis.